

# From Resistance to Resilience: Feministic Development in Sidhwa's Heroines

Zia Ahmed, Behzad Anwar, Badeea Waheed Shah

## **Abstract**

*This paper attempts to explore the ways and means that are employed by Sidhwa to reflect on the lives of Pakistani women through her heroines. Sidhwa's heroines undergo a specific pattern of resistance and resilience by first surrendering to the existing norms and traditions but later on develop resistance to them and employ every possible mode of resistance and emerge as resilient women. Sidhwa's heroines are portrayed waging this struggle in a patriarchal set up of Pakistan where tradition and custom controls the body and movement of women and so undermines their socio-economic status. The struggle of women in Pakistani society is demanding and so needs to be explored as to how Pakistani women, as portrayed by Sidhwa, suffer physically and psychologically. This struggle of Pakistani women portrayed by Sidhwa aligns her with the feminist struggle all around the postcolonial world. This study critically analyses the selected passages of the text of Sidhwa's three novels titled The Pakistani Bride, Ice Candy Man and An American Brat and discovers the mode employed by Sidhwa to show resistance of women similar to those portrayed in postcolonial literature as suggested by Ashcroft.*

## **Introduction**

Sidhwa attempts to work on the cause of Pakistani women and their emancipation by using the tool of their creative writings in the fashion of most of the postcolonial writers. Ashcroft (2004) recognizes the fact and says, "post-colonial theory focuses instead on an exploration of the ways in which the dominated or colonized culture can use the tools of the dominant discourse to resist its political or cultural control" (Ashcroft, 2004 p. 15). Sidhwa took up the opportunity to debate the gendered role and sexuality of women in Pakistan by exploring the patriarchal pattern in Pakistani society and way through which body of women is used to play politics and establish control. According to Rudra (2016), "Foucault (1978) argues that instead of using violent methods to control individuals, modern societies rely on systematic self-surveillance and correction" (Rudra, 2016). Interestingly, the novels of Angela Carter and Bapsi Sidhwa are packed with the heartrending scenes of sexuality and oppression. Patriarchal social and religious institutions coerce woman into docile bodies in a systematic manner (Arora, 2015).

Politically, the start of the decade of 1970s created upheavals as well as brought settlement to many of the thorny issues besetting Pakistan. History repeated itself, and



Pakistan was divided to give birth to Bangladesh. The rule of military was done away with and democracy was established under the new and inspired leadership in former West Pakistan and now Islamic Republic of Pakistan. These political changes influenced the world of fiction. The period showed the devastation of war, on the one hand, and lamentation on the loss of one part of Pakistan, on the other hand. Family laws were already promulgated in 1961 for the protection and benefit of Muslim women. These laws were mostly concerned with the dowry, divorce, and rights of property for Muslim women in Pakistan. With it, the promulgation of Zina ordinance and registration of marriage also proved helpful for the women. However, the Zina ordinance (1979) was not without its repercussions. Patel (2003) says that it created many complications regarding the crime of rape and Zina, because it was much confusing to determine whether a particular act was Zina or rape. This is the way through which societies control the lives and sexualities of women as is suggested Arora (2015) and Rudra (2016).

But alongside this, the establishment of democracy had also inspired some writers to talk about the human rights, especially the rights of women. Fiction started to criticize openly, wherever the rights of women were being neglected, and appreciated widely the role of those women who had come at the forefront because of their courage, hard work, and education. These women started to play a very dominant role in the modern Pakistani society. Such women were the role models for the other women who were being deprived of their legitimate rights. All this, with blatant miscarriages of justice, galvanized educated professional women in Pakistan, particularly lawyers, welfare workers, and journalists. They formed Women Action Forum which came out into the streets to protest against "Zia's laws" (1981). The last quarter of the 1970s, was a particular period of Islamization process, initiated by the then military ruler of Pakistan. Democracy and the basic rights of the common men and women were thrown into the dustbin. A strict Islamic social code was visible everywhere. It was not possible for the fiction writers of Pakistan to voice their concerns about the injustice being meted out to the women while living in Pakistan. Most of them, like (1967) went abroad, and continued to write about the depressed condition of the women.

In Pakistan, Islam and Islamization has played a very significant part in constructing the system and ideology of the state and influencing the lives of its people, especially that of the women. Islamization means the reinforcement of the conservative ideas which tend to minimize the role of women in the society and crushes all the social programmes and policies made for the betterment of women. For example, during Zia's regime (1977-1988), the issues of women's political representation and the conflict between the Muslim family laws and the civil and democratic rights were the matters of concern for the feminists. The urban women formed various resistance groups to voice their opinion against the Hudood ordinance basing their concerns on the fact that the Hudood ordinance did not distinguish between rape and adultery. This struggle of women was the first sign of their overt struggle against the impact of Islamization on their lives. It does not mean that Islam has been against women. In fact, Islam is responsible for

awakening the men and women of Indian subcontinent for their separate political representation but after 1947, it was hijacked by certain forces in Pakistan, which insisted on the conservative interpretation of Islam. The status and political representation accorded to the women during the Pakistan movement was in clash with the new status that was assigned to the women under the process of conservative Islamization. During the Zia regime, the heaviest social impact was received by women when it passed number of anti-women laws. "Immediately after the coup, General Zia launched a much-publicized Islam-ization campaign. Women suddenly became the main target of this campaign as a number of measures adversely affecting women were passed by the government between 1978 and 1981" (Khan, 2001).

It is here in mid-1980s that women started to emphasize for their rights and hence, a large number of women were mobilized for this, almost from all the sections of Pakistani society, in the presence of extreme militancy and military regime. This struggle of women in Pakistan was not simply against patriarchy but also against tribalism, feudalism, and capitalism. Same is the case of the gender gap in education and employment in Pakistan for which Islamization was not responsible directly but its stress on the traditional roles of women and protection of honour of women under the cultural norms limited the movement of women and promoted gender segregation and gender disparities. Women's rights movements are deeply resentful about this because wherever in Pakistan the conservative forces have been dominant, the number of school going girls is very little.

Although the constitution of Pakistan guarantees the rights of women but a parallel Islamic legal system negates these rights. For example, it allows polygamy and the total absence of any financial security after divorce. This has raised the issues like inequality of rights regarding inheritance, age and termination of marriage and natural guardianship of children after the family breaks up. Women's struggle in Pakistan has been against all the above said discriminations. For example, Benazir Bhutto, during her election campaign in 1988 made struggle against anti-female attitude of the Zia regime as major theme of her political activities.

Before the process of Islamization began, the democratic interlude gave Pakistan a befitting recognition in the world community. The then political leadership tried to manage the political and economic affairs of the country in a better way. One of the relevant measures was to send a large number of Pakistanis to the foreign lands for work and for immigration. The people, who went to advanced European countries, realized the differences between the lives of the women in the foreign lands and their homelands. Such writers tried to awaken the women of their homelands by giving portrayals of struggling women through fiction. This is the very reason that the portrayal of women in Pakistani fiction after the 1970s is not that of passive, silent, and non-progressive women, but rather, now the women were shown to be struggling against the odds of the society and challenging their validity. If the women portrayed in the Pakistani fiction before 1970s was a suffering woman and had a desire to liberate her, the women portrayal in the

Pakistani fiction after 1970s showed the will of the women to translate their desire into action to liberate themselves from the oppressive customs and traditions of the Pakistani society.

### **Literature Review**

As already pointed out the concept of 'Chaddar and Chardevari' was enforced on women in the 1980s and every step was taken to control their lives. During this period, Sidhwa played a major role with fiction produced by her for almost a decade, along with many other writers who continued to voice their opinion against the suppressive laws promulgated by the then regime. Ashcroft supports this idea when he says, "However, both feminists and colonized peoples, like other subordinate groups, have also used appropriation to subvert and adapt dominant languages and signifying practices". (Ashcroft, 2004, p. 93)

After Shahnawaz (1957) and Hameedullah (1958), Sidhwa is one of the popular Pakistani women writers with the feminist sensibilities and tendencies. At the time of America's civil rights movement and the presence of increasingly assertive migrant communities, the publication of Sidhwa's novels which coincided with a strong, politicized women's movement for the better status of women in Pakistan, makes her a champion of women's rights and feminism in Pakistan. Sidhwa believes in projection against oppression on women in Pakistani society. She believes and says about her and other women writers that "as women, consciously or unconsciously, we bring out the problems and discrimination women face and project our aspirations" (Sood, 2007, online). She herself doesn't like to preach about feminism but the way the stories unfold, illustrate their [writers] position in the family and in society. For example, her novel, *The Bride* (1983) tells us the story of a simple girl, who was married to a hill-man. She, like Shahnawaz (1957), is against the forced marriages, and shows in this novel that women must not be compelled to undergo a marriage without their choice because it ruins their social and psychological beings.

### **Research Methodology**

The selected passages of the novels by Sidhwa have been critically read and analysed. The passages have been selected on the basis of their contents relevant to the themes of Suppression on women and the social control exercised through different institutions and social behaviours of the society. Critical analysis of these passages of the text may show the way the patriarchy, society, and religion are used as tools for the objectification and subjugation of women. Postcolonial Feminist theory has been applied in the sense that there is always the binary opposition working to develop one section of the society as colonized being and the other section as colonizer, as is suggested by Ashcroft (2004) this binary opposition of US/THEM works in the Pakistani family and social set up in the same way as it works in postcolonial theory.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Sidhwa's Portrayal of Women in *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), is the portrayal of struggling bride (Zaitoon), given by Sidhwa, is much in contrast to the portrayal of Mehru by Ali (1940). This is the very change in the portrayals of women in the fiction of the modern-day writers of Pakistan. This novel speaks in favour of all such women who face the situation like that of the heroine of this novel. Sidhwa's second novel, *The Crow Eaters* (1980), although reflects much of the life of her Parsee community, was also about the national politics and the gender issues in Pakistan. It is the story that, along with business tricks, also deals with the exploitation of women at the hands of wealthy people in Pakistani society. Her third novel *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) takes up the issues which are more related to politics, partition, and the aftermaths of partition and the sufferings of women in Pakistan. Last of her novels *An American Brat* (1994) is the novel that challenges the myths of marriage in a conservative society like Pakistan. Though the heroine belonged to the Parsee community but she was much resisted when she wanted to marry an American. However, "she persisted and ultimately succeeded in doing so" (Sood 2007, online). The women portrayals in all these novels of Sidhwa are not that of voiceless, compromising, and suppressed women but those who would challenge the existing system in order to make their life as they want. Following discussion on her women characters would be suitable to this claim.

Sidhwa's novel *The Bride* (1983) has highlighted the misery of a young woman, namely Zaitoon. The story of this novel begins in the rocky peaks of the Kohistani areas of Pakistan, and ends also there, but with a travel of the plains of Punjab. The writer is able to provide a contrast at all levels between the lives of woman in Punjab and those of the segregated fringes of the Indus River. The main idea behind this contrast is the warmth of feelings and emotions, which is replaced by the jealousy and the harsh and uncontrollable anger of the old conservative society of the mountainous areas of Pakistan where Pakistani authorities have a very flexible control.

Though the novelist has used the partition of Indo-Pak subcontinent as the background to her novel yet an incident during the partition process brings a girl of four years, Munni (later on named Zaitoon), under the control of Qasim Khan, a man from Kohistan, when her parents are killed because of the Sikh attack on the train. Qasim brings the girl to Lahore, where she grew up under the loving and caring affection of both Qasim Khan and Merrium, the wife of Nikka Pehlwan, who had become a friend and a business partner of Qasim Khan. Qasim Khan named her Zaitoon after the name of his own dead daughter and nobody knew whether Zaitoon was the daughter of Qasim or not. She attended school only till the time she became young and reached the age of marriage. At her first menstruation Merrium commented, "You are now a woman. Don't play with boys—and don't allow any man to touch you. This is why I wear a Burkha ... She decided it was time she had a chat with Qasim. She insisted Zaitoon stop going to school and he agreed" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 52). This is the type of segregation that the particular Pakistani cultural set up tries to impose on a young woman. According to Rozario (2001),

the first menstruation is the signal that the woman now has to restrict and limit herself from the males around her as if she becomes a type of danger and needs to be separated and handed over to another male in marriage as soon as possible.

Qasim's feelings of love and affection for Zaitoon change very soon when she becomes a young woman and his phallocentric and misogynic cultural traditions about women assert in his attitude towards Zaitoon. When she grows up, he hands her over to a person of his clan, living in the remote portion of the mountains of Pakistan. From here, begins the bad lot of the girl who is never asked about the major decision of her life. The requests of Zohra and Nikka, to stop this marriage, are turned down and brushed away under the name of the 'word' given to his clan's men. Zaitoon was to leave Lahore for far-flung mountains to marry such a man whom she never saw, and was to adapt to a culture that was not only unknown to her, but also so much different from that one in which she was brought up. The innocent girl did not have any idea about her future in the same way as Mehru (Ali, 1940) did not have any idea about her future husband. Her well-wisher aunt Merriam tries to stop this. She knew something about the tribal men and their ways of life. She told Qasim, "But you've been with us so long, you're changed. Why. Most of them are bandits; they don't know how to treat women! I tell you, she'll be a slave you watch, and she'll have no one to turn to. No one" (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 92). It was the lack of education and awareness that she could not understand the difficulty she was about to enter. Only when her father left her alone in the custody of unknown and strange people, she realised her predicament.

She made a desperate attempt to persuade her father to take her back to the plains. But nothing could be done and she had to bear the burden of tradition and custom. She was beaten up harshly and was given the food of her dislike and made to work hard.

Sidhwa describes the way her husband treated her even on the little suspicions, in the following lines:

Sakhi's hand flicked again, and the stone grazed her forehead. With eyes riveted on him in bewilderment and terror, hurriedly Zaitoon scrambled for safety. He jumped, landing as lightly as a cat on a small flat rock. Another leap and he was level with her. Zaitoon tried to crumble backwards, blindly scraping her knuckles on the rock wall. Skimming the boulders in vast strides, Sakhi seized her. He dragged her along the crag. 'You whore,' he hissed. His fury was so intense she thought he would kill her. He cleared his throat and spat full in her face. 'You dirty, black little bitch, waving at those pigs...' Gripping her with one hand he waved the other in a lewd caricature of the girl's brief gesture. 'Waving at that shit-eating swine. You wanted him to stop and fuck you, didn't you!' (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 185-186)

The above quote demonstrates the differences of culture and its repercussions. There is rigidity and intolerance in the behaviour of Sakhi and he does hesitate from brutalising his wife on the slightest pretext. There is not only abusive behaviour but also the abusive language sufficient to hurt and intimidate her. The reactionary attitude adopted by the husband shows an absence of dialogue attitude and the prevalence of force

attitude. Her husband, from a different culture, could not understand her and gave her terrible beating at the slightest provocation. At last, she thought of escape and decided to run away but this proved too hard for her. Sidhwa describes one of the desperate situation in which Zaitoon remained while struggling to come out of the mountains, in the following lines:

Zaitoon awoke before dawn. The settlement below, except for the faint rustle of the stream gurgling through it, slept quietly. The wind had died but a dull roar persisted in her ears. Zaitoon shook her head. She was damp with sweat, and though her fever had subsided, she blamed it for the humming in her head. Or was it caused by hunger? She plugged her ears. When she removed her fingers, the muffled roar was still there. (Sidhwa, 1983, p. 212)

The daring step taken by Zaitoon is the challenge to the ancient customs and traditions of the tribal society of Pakistan. Although Zaitoon is treated like Mehru of Ali (1940), yet Zaitoon is unable to accept her bondage and aspired to challenge her bondage. Sidhwa's (1983) portrayal of women, therefore, is daring and challenging and wishes to succeed even at the cost of life. It is rare and bold step on the part of woman against the harsh and hard traditions and customs of Pakistani society. Zaitoon spends at least fifteen days in the mountains before she could reach the safe bridge constructed by the Pakistan army but only after living and travelling hungry in the mountains and being raped twice. In the meanwhile, hunting parties had been arranged to kill her and to bring her dead body back to keep the traditions of the Kohistani people alive. Luckily, her struggle is successful and she escapes all this and is rescued ultimately by the daring step of a Pakistani army officer.

### **Sidhwa's Portrayal of Women Ice-Candy Man (1988)**

Similar is the case when Sidhwa (1988) discusses about the changing condition of women because of the effects of partition of Indo-Pak Sub-Continent into India and Pakistan. Her novel *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) makes a comment on the victimization of women because of the partition process. It is especially reflective of the victimization of the poor women who are represented through the character of Shanta. In the novel, Shanta works as ayah of Lenny. Shanta has been portrayed as young Hindu woman equipped with all the necessary charms of an attractive woman. She is loved by many but all try to seduce her. The writer describes the beauty and charm of Shanta that she is chocolate-brown and short. "Everything about her is eighteen years old and round and plump. Even her face. Full-blown cheeks, pouting mouth and smooth forehead curve to form a circle with her head. Her hair is pulled back in a tight knot" (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 3).

Shanta wants to return her home after partition of India, but is compelled to stay because of the fear of the rioters. The partition affects her more than anybody else. She is removed from her protective home to the asylum of a brothel because of her lover, the ice-candy man. Although other women characters are there, the sufferings of Ayah make her the central and most important women character in the novel. The story starts and ends at

Ayah. She has the desire to get more money. She gives her money to one of her lovers, Sharbat Khan, to lend to others on interest. She is thankful to Khan who bribes her by bringing some dry fruit for her from his hilly areas. Though she is obedient and self-sacrificing yet she meets a very bad end. She is made prostitute but she is rescued by the senior member of the Parsee family and goes back to her family in Amritsar. She is sensual, clever, hardworking, loving, and willing to survive on her own. She is the woman who likes to work at a rich household instead of begging and prostitution, yet she could not be spared from the effects of partition. Sidhwa describes the situation when she was pulled out of the Lenny's home forcefully by the rioters because she was a Hindu, in the following lines:

*The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart and their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, lift her into it. Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces. The last thing I noticed was Ayah, her mouth slack and piteously gaping, her dishevelled hair flying into her kidnappers' faces, staring at us as if she wanted to leave behind her wide-open and terrified eyes. (Sidhwa, 1988, p. 183-184)*

Not only she suffers these atrocities committed by the men because of the riots of partition but also she loses her social status. She was brought to a brothel by one of her lovers, apparently to save her from the violence of the Muslims and the Sikhs. The family of Lenny recognized the changed Ayah in her out look of a dancing girl, as the lines show:

*And then Ayah comes: teetering on high heels, tripping on the massive divided skirt of her garara. Jangling gold bangles. Her eyes are lowered and her head draped in a gold-fringed and gauzy red ghongat. A jeweled tika nestles on her forehead and bunches of pearls and gold dangle from her ears. Ice-candy-man guides his rouged and lipsticked bride to sit beside Godmother. (Sidhwa, 1988, p.260)*

Sidhwa has not failed to notice the happenings of the society that directly affect the lives of women, young and old, in Pakistan. In her novel *An American Brat* (1994), she reflects back to the period of general Zia's martial law. During this period, many changes were made to Islamize the society. One of them was about the women dresses. It was said that the women must wear such a dress as may provide them the full covering. Some Pakistanis appreciated this and some resented but the special resentment came out from the minority communities, like the Parsees. Sidhwa tells us about Feroza, the daughter of Zareen and Cyrus, who was a student at an English medium school. She had conservative atmosphere at her school, where the dress code was strictly observed in case of women under the pressure of the reforms about the dress of women introduced by the Zia's regime. She tried to follow it and could not, therefore, bear that her mother should



come to her school while wearing a sleeveless shirt. She even forbade her mother from coming to her school in that dress. Sidhwa (1994) says:

*"In the car she said, 'Mummy please don't come to school dressed like that.' She objected to my sleeveless sari blouse! Really the narrow-minded attitude touted by general Zia is infecting her, too, I told her, 'Look we are Parsee, and everybody knows we dress differently'." (p. 10).*

The real thing that matters does not stop here. Sidhwa goes on to reflect on the behavioural change, the mental conflicts and the internal agitation that the young women may undergo because of such changes in the society. These young women after being grown up may become rebellious against the society which had, somehow, repressed their feelings. Whenever a conservative change takes place in the society, women are the first to fall victim to it. But while doing so, they develop many unwanted patterns of their lives that usually snatch their peace of life.

Sidhwa makes Zareen speak about this resentment:

*If you think I am going to cater to this, this MULLAH-ISH mentality of yours, you're mistaken.' She said, slamming the door shut. I shall dress the way my mother dresses, and I shall dress the way my grandmother dressed! And no one's ever called the junglewalla women indecent. (Sidhwa, 1994, p. 13)*

But the same girl Feroza, who objected to her mother's sleeveless dress at her school, becomes assertive and independent in all the matters of her life when she migrates to the free American society. She exposes herself to her heart's cherished desires and her real self. She often stands rapt before the paintings and the natural scenes. She even forgets to accompany her uncle when she is absorbed in the museum in seeing one of her favourite scenes. She is more open and tolerant to the Americans than her uncle Manek is. However, there are certain factors like the bullying and threats to her chastity in America which reflects that the male psychology is almost the same in the whole world. Anyhow, the control on such impulses is exercised more in the civilized societies because of the socio-economic empowerment of women. Sidhwa gives the impression that a woman is safer and her efforts are more fruitful and productive in a comparatively more civilized and liberal society.

Sidhwa has also offered a contrast between the lives of the American women and well-to-do Pakistani ones. Jo represents the American women and the Pakistani ones are represented through Feroza. The writer here shows her belief that the American parents and the family of the young American women have no gender, honour or shame-based problems with their daughters about their relations, work, or socializing. There is no tension developed between the parents and the daughters, even if the child adopts a path of life against the will of the parents. While this case is reverse with Pakistani women.

The society in Pakistan is so much riddled with traditions and customs that it is almost impossible to use the right choice without offending one's parents and family.

Sidhwa (1994) says:

*And, surprisingly, even though Feroza found Millers' way of life admirably tolerant and eminently desirable, she could not imagine it transposed to any community, whether it was Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or Parsee in her part of the world. What would life be like in her family and in Lahore without the extravagant guidance and dire warnings, the endless quoting of homilies, and the benign and sometime not so benign advice, inquisitiveness and interference? (p. 209)*

### Conclusion

The portrayal of Zaitoon shows her as a woman, who would not say 'yes' to all the harshness meted out to her. She can be trained but cannot be compelled into the obedience by force. She is the woman, who can run into the most difficult circumstances in order to save herself from the harshness of the custom and the tradition. The portrayal of Zaitoon shows the cruel nature of non-state laws as well as state-laws which have been formulated in the name of religion and culture. These laws are mostly designed to control the lives of women in accordance with the socio-cultural customs of Pakistan, especially in the tribal areas. Shamsie (2005) has also pointed out that over the years, there has been constant pressure from the liberals and journalists in Pakistan to rescind the discriminatory laws passed in the name of religion during the 1980s, but no government, elected or otherwise, has done so because of the fear of alienating Pakistan's clerks. As lawlessness spread, ancient tribal customs were confused with religion, killing of woman in the name of honour increased and a parallel system of justice, the village Jirga ensured further victimization. The portrayal of Zaitoon by Sidhwa reflects these tendencies of Pakistani society and portrays the difficulties women undergo because of them. Zaitoon's escape is the struggle of every woman against the above said anti-women socio-cultural traditions.

The character portrayal of Zaitoon reveals Sidhwa's feministic trends. Sidhwa (1983) portrayed this character after she had visited the hilly areas of Pakistan and had witnessed the tale of horror. Sidhwa (1983) has tendency to reflect the poor condition of women and the system which was exploiting their bodies. This character by Sidhwa (1983) surely brings before us the true feelings of the writer. This writer gives character sketch of Zaitoon who fights her way out after bearing many physical and mental sufferings but ultimately succeeds. This is a model of success according to the writer. This character proves to be very useful in challenging the myth of inferiority and weakness of women. The innocence of Zaitoon and the struggle against the harsh terrain by Zaitoon is representative of the innocence and the struggle of every woman in Pakistan who wants to change her life. The mountains she crosses are not simply the harshness and hardness but these are the harsh and hard social, religious, and state laws

and customs designed against women in Pakistan. Though this challenge is very difficult to take yet it is worth taking. Only the writers of modern Pakistan try to show these tendencies in the women characters portrayed by them and show through their characters that women now are not willing to submit to the cruel and unjust demands of the social customs and traditions but rather would prefer to wage a struggle against it.

Shanta's portrayal also reflects a struggling woman who would like to do anything to survive. She survives the upheavals of the riots that took place during partition in 1947. Although Shanta is abducted during the riots but she is discovered again and is helped to reach her people in India. Shanta's character represents all those women who had to undergo sufferings during the process of independence of Indo-Pak subcontinent. Most of these women were lost, never to be discovered again and even if these were discovered, they were broken, mutilated, and miserable. Sidhwa (1988) makes Shanta survive and reach her people as well. Like Bertrand Russell, Sidhwa supports the idea of workingwoman. But workingwoman has to face many social stigmas in Pakistan. One of them is the passing comments and staring at the workingwomen. This factor though not absent, yet is less intense in the advanced societies where women can work whatever they like. Feroza, the heroine of the novel *An American Brat* (1994), felt much at ease in doing whatever she wanted to do in the free American society.

In the free society of America, she goes so far ahead to exercise her desires. She writes a letter to tell her family in Pakistan about her wish of marrying an American. This creates a stir in her community in Pakistan. Her parents and her family disapprove of this. Hence, Zareen, her mother, is dispatched to the US with mission to resolve the issue. This freedom of choice, in view of the writer, might not have come in the tradition bound society of Pakistan, given that her Parsee religion and her dwindling community do not permit the marriages Parsees to a non-Parsee.

It was the freedom of women in the educated and civilized society of the US that ultimately Zareen had to return home leaving her daughter with David to enjoy her life with the man she loved. The writer succeeds in giving victory to one young woman of her own community over the centuries-old system of tradition and religion. But it was possible in a free and independent society only where women are comparatively more empowered and more emancipated. It is not simply the change of geography, but a culture of equality and free-will that has empowered her. But in Pakistan, we have just put our first footsteps on the pavement that will lead to the emancipation and empowerment of women in full and they may be considered equal in all walks of life — either social or political.

The character portrayal of Feroza by Sidhwa is also the character of a daring young woman who would prefer to enjoy her life on her own terms and would be ready to challenge any of the norms of the society. She was a Pakistani Parsee girl. Parsee families do not marry outside their family. Feroza challenges this myth by persisting in marrying a non-Parsee man, David. Though she had not to scale the heights of mountains to achieve her aim like Zaitoon, yet she had to scale the mental and religious boundaries

in order to achieve her aim. Feroza's character is that of an educated young woman, who knows her rights and duties and especially her duty to herself. She sheds away all the constraints of the social and political norms of Pakistani society and her own community because she believed that these norms undermined the freedom of choice of women. She exercised her right of choice and, in this way broke the spell of tradition on her. Feroza is the representative of all the educated women of modern Pakistan where they would like to exercise their right of choice instead of surrendering to the existing norms and traditions.

## References

- **Arora, Richa. 2015.** Aesthetics of Sexuality: A Post-Colonial Reading of The Select Novels of Angela Carter and Bapsi Sidhwa. *The Achievers Journal*. Retrieved from: <https://theachieversjournal.com/2015/02/19/richa-aroracontextualizing-gothic-feminism-bluebeard-patriarchy-and-aesthetics-of-sexuality-a-post-colonial-reading-of-the-select-novels-of-angela-carter-and-bapsi-sidhwa/>
- **Ashcroft, Bill, et al. 2004.** *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge
- **Hameedullah, Zaib-un-Nisa. 1958.** *The Young Wife and Other Stories* Karachi: Din Muhammadi Press
- **Khan, Leena Z. 2001.** *Women's Activism and Politics in Pakistan*. The Institute of Current world Affairs Letters. South Asia. Hanover: NH.
- **Rudra, Shivangi. 2016.** Corporeal and Gendered Existence: A Critical Analysis of The Pakistani Bride. *The Achievers Journal*. Retrieved from: <https://theachieversjournal.com/2016/01/03/shivangi-rudra-corporeal-and-gendered-existence-a-critical-analysis-of-the-pakistani-bride/>
- **Rozario, Santi. 2001.** *Purity and Communal Boundaries*. Dhaka: The University Press.
- **Patel, Rashida. 2003.** *Woman Versus Man*. New York: OUP.
- **Shahnawaz, Mumtaz.** *The Heart Divided*. Lahore: Mumtaz Publications, 1957
- **Sidhwa, Bapsi. 1980.** *The Crow Eaters*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- **- - -. 1994.** *The American Brat*. New Dehli: Penguin.
- **- - -. 1983.** *The Bride*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- **- - -. 1988.** *Ice-Candy Man*. London: Heinemann.
- **Sood, Gauray. 2007.** *Interview: Bapsi Sidhwa*. Pakistan Paindabad: Bapsi Sihwa. 17-7-2007. 10-7-2008. <<http://pakistanpaindabad.blogspot.com/2007/06/bapsi-sidhwa-i-wrote-naturally-about.html>>